

SECRET

March 1, 1991

MEMORANDUM FOR DAN GOODLEAF

cc: Dick Gentles
Margaret Bloodworth

FROM: Dan Gagnier

DND Surveys on Homosexuality

The methodological and communications issues related to the decision not to allow DND to go ahead with its external survey are much broader than might seem at first glance.

Senator Murray and his Committee are responsible for the use and quality of all public opinion research which is conducted by departments across the federal government. It is not the issue of homosexuality per se which concerns us; as you point out it is and will continue to be in the public domain. It is the image of the Government of Canada vis à vis its use of survey data, especially data from a survey which has a questionable rationale and which has an instrument which appears to be biased.

Questions posed about the use of survey data are difficult enough to deal with in normal circumstances. When an issue as controversial as homosexuality is the topic of research, one is almost guaranteed media coverage. Journalists request the results of surveys on an ongoing basis. It is our view that we would not be able to defend the use of this survey. We have therefore recommended that it not be granted approval.

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Should DND wish to re-visit the design of the survey, with particular emphasis on the wording of the questionnaire, and submit another proposal for research through the CPOR, we would recommend the Senator consider it. However, it should not be assumed that the approval process is simply a rubber-stamp. Depending on the quality of proposals for the research and on the way in which the results might be used, approval to go ahead could, indeed, not be given.

W.R.
x Deputy Secretary
to the Cabinet
Consultations
and
Communications

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